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C O N F I D E N T I A L QUITO 000513

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: TWENTY YEARS
TAGS: PREL MARR SNAR PHUM OAS EC
SUBJECT: LATEST ROUNDS OF ANTI-U.S. RHETORIC

REF: A. STATE 62142
¶B. QUITO 449
¶C. QUITO 391
¶D. QUITO 233

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: While the GOE talked in Washington about
expanding bilateral cooperation, the Correa government and
its fellow travelers here in Ecuador continued to bash the
U.S. Unsubstantiated allegations over the last few weeks
included that the U.S. Forward Operating Location (FOL)
caused the untimely deaths of over 1,000 Ecuadorians, that
the CIA usurped control of Ecuador's intelligence services,
and that the CIA paid off journalists who wrote stories
critical of former Minister Larrea. In addition, President
Correa rejected Washington's comments on press freedom in
Ecuador, and advocated that the OAS be junked in favor of an
organization that would exclude the U.S. Public bashing of
the U.S. and private cooperation is par for the course in
Correa's Ecuador. It is still not clear to us whether
post-election Correa is headed in a truly anti-U.S.
direction, or whether the relationship will still allow us to
continue to achieve our strategic anti-narcotics and
anti-terrorism objectives. End Summary.

¶2. (C) Foreign Minister Fander Falconi's efforts to define
new areas of cooperation with the U.S. during his June 11-12
visit to Washington marked the positive side of the ledger in
U.S.-Ecuador relations (Ref A). Meanwhile, anti-U.S.
rhetoric by President Correa and his Proud and Sovereign
Fatherland (PAIS) movement over the last several weeks
included a few new variants, together with many familiar
themes.

-- A mandatory government broadcast that television stations
carried the week of June 15 accused the CIA of controlling
Ecuador's military intelligence services under the current
set-up. It rehashed old stories about the CIA's role
overseas and an alleged CIA agent in Ecuador. The
broadcast's purpose was to defend the GOE's proposed national
security law, which would create an intelligence secretariat
under the President's office with a budget that would not be
made public. Critics had charged that the intelligence
secretariat would serve Correa's political objectives and
lack appropriate oversight.

-- During his June 13 radio/TV address, President Correa
responded angrily to USG comments on the importance of press
freedom. He mocked the newspaper El Universo for quoting
Washington statements, saying "The White House spokesperson
told us not to be naughty boys. And that makes front page
news here...Do you know how much I care about what the
Secretary of State says? Here, I care about what the
Ecuadorian people say."

-- PAIS Assembly member Marcos Martinez, president of the
interim legislature's international relations commission,

called former senior government officials for questioning in early June, while publicly recommending that they be charged with treason for allowing the U.S. FOL (a counternarcotics surveillance facility in Manta, Ecuador) to violate Ecuadorian sovereignty and cause the sinking of fishing boats and the death of many innocent Ecuadorians. After initially referring to 12 sunken boats and one disappearance, on June 10 he claimed that information from human rights groups showed more than 1,000 FOL-related deaths in the last ten years. Martinez also denigrated the FOL's accomplishments, using creative math to claim that it was responsible for the capture of only ten tons of drugs per year. In contrast, USG figures show that since the FOL's inception, it has contributed to the interdiction or seizure of over 1,740 metric tons of narcotics. Martinez told the press that he planned to submit his report on the FOL to President Correa on July 15, after which the GOE should carry out an investigation. The July 15 timing may be tied to our planned July 17 ceremony commemorating the last flight from the FOL and highlighting its accomplishments.

-- Former Coordinating Minister of Internal and External Security Gustavo Larrea, anxious to revive his political fortunes, blamed accusations against him on CIA payoffs to unspecified journalists. Journalists and other critics had accused Larrea of not carrying out his obligations as minister and inappropriate ties to the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) after a former subordinate of his was charged with supporting FARC drug trafficking (Ref D). Larrea's remarks came during a June 2 plenary session of the PAIS-controlled legislature. The legislature's oversight commission had already concluded that there was insufficient evidence to investigate Larrea as demanded by the opposition, but Larrea still worked his way into the plenary session at the last minute to defend himself publicly. Correa has already said that he plans to bring Larrea back into his government.

-- On May 31 in Honduras, President Correa again called for the abolition of the OAS, to be replaced by an Organization of Latin American States "without the influence of the United States."

¶3. (C) COMMENT: Ecuador's mixed message about the U.S. reflects President Correa's own ambivalence, as well as the range of competing voices within his movement. Correa seems to recognize that the GOE needs a cooperative relationship with the U.S., both for its concrete benefits and to convince those among his supporters who are skeptical of his coziness with Iran and ALBA. The GOE apparently believes it can obtain what it seeks from Washington while bashing America regularly at home. We continue to engage the GOE in an effort to maintain and strengthen cooperation in areas that support U.S. interests. At the same time, we have sought to get our own message out in non-confrontational ways in response to the most egregious accusations, so the public hears the other side of the story.

HODGES